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TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY DOBRIANSKY FROM AMBASSADOR HUME

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/09/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: KEEPING INDONESIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES IN
PERSPECTIVE

Classified By: Ambassador Cameron R. Hume, reasons 1.4 (b,d).

[11](#). (C) I would like to appeal for your support in finalizing the 2007 Indonesia Country Report on Human Rights Practices. Indonesia has changed dramatically in the last ten years and continues to consolidate these changes. The report needs to include language in the introduction that recognizes this democratic transformation in order to provide context for continuing human rights problems. Because the transition has been so peaceful -- a revolution by consensus, as it were -- we may fail to grasp how much change has occurred. In this vein, to ensure a balanced overall perspective, it is fair and appropriate to cite the 2007 Freedom House Report on Indonesia, identifying it as the only country in Southeast Asia to earn the "free" rating.

[12](#). (C) The Embassy is sending to DRL a proposed revised text for the introduction which, I believe, is an accurate and fair description of where Indonesia stands today. Such an assessment of continuing problems hinges on where we set an appropriate threshold of significance. One or two incidents per year do not spell a national trend. The list of human rights problems that appears in the introduction should focus only on the truly significant ones.

[13](#). (C) Finally, there is the question of accountability for past abuses. This involves the more fundamental issue of the extent to which a new regime, and the society that underpins it, should be held accountable for the deeds of the regime that preceded it. In Indonesia's case, the post-Suharto change was dramatic and immediate, and the new Indonesia has worked hard to distance itself from that past. Democratic Indonesia is far from perfect, but we need to judge it by its own actions and ideals and not by its ability to rectify a past which it has deliberately left behind. The inability to deal jurisprudentially with that past can and should be mentioned in the report as a contextual, political factor, but not as a human rights abuse of contemporary Indonesia.

HUME